

Statement from the family of Jill Blue Reich, wife of Maj. Stephen Reich

Our daughter, Jill, appreciates the sincere outpouring of sympathy from the local community at this very difficult time. Your support is appreciated as we mourn the loss of Stephen--a devoted husband and dedicated soldier.

Stephen grew up in the small town of Washington, Connecticut, the oldest of three children. He was much loved by his family, which includes two younger sisters. Stephen was a 1993 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and had served in the Army for 12 years, most recently assigned as a helicopter pilot to special operations. While at West Point he was a baseball player and became the Army's career strikeout leader. He established a league strikeout record of 88 as a senior and was chosen as a member of the 1993 Team USA.

Jill and Stephen celebrated their marriage at a small ceremony March 19, 2005, at Blue Mountain Beach in South Walton County, Florida, attended by only a few friends and family members, just a few days before his fourth deployment to Afghanistan. Stephen's military service brought them together as Stephen had just transferred to Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia in the fall of 2004 only a few weeks before Jill moved from Savannah to Panama City. They met at Forsythe Park in Savannah while Stephen was walking his two dogs and Jill was walking her two dogs one afternoon.

"It was a case of love at first sight for Jill and Stephen, and they wanted very much to be married before Stephen's deployment," said Rob Blue, Jill's father. "They both loved the outdoors and enjoyed camping out with all four of the dogs, hiking and swimming." "In each other they found a singular love and exuberance for life."

"Stephen accomplished so much in his all too short life," said Rob, "He was just too good to be true and we are just devastated by his loss." He would want to be remembered as someone who loved life, who cared deeply for his country and the men under his command. The family asks that everyone recognize the deep sacrifices being made this Fourth of July by the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families worldwide.

Friends wishing to make contributions in lieu of flowers can make donations to Habitat for Humanity and to the Night Stalkers Association, a group that supports the families of soldiers serving in the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne). For more information, please visit www.nightstalkers.com